CLAY GEERDES' COMIX WAVE 90 © 1990. World Rights Reserved. Logo by Grass Green. Artwork herein © the artists concerned. Used here for promotional purposes only.

NOTE TO SUBSCRIBERS

The bracketed number on your mailing list is the number of your last issue. I have converted the years to number of issues and will no longer put the month on my newsletter. Those who have subscribed for this year should renew at No. 94 to insure continuity. -Clay Geerdes

THE NEW DISNEY COMICS

For the first time, Disney has taken over the publication of the comic books that have been coming out since 1941 [MICKEY MOUSE was in magazine format from 1935-41], and the first eight titles appeared on sale in early April of this year. WALT DISNEY'S COMICS AND STORIES 548 is likely to be a hot collector's item so race out and buy your dozen. The artwork, mostly by Spanish artists who have worked in animation, is very meticulous and in that premiere Donald Duck story, *Home is the Hero*, the style of Carl Barks has been imitated down to the eyeball. Only Donald and his nephews appear in the story, basically a Junior Woodchucks tale, and it is clear that Disney intends to retain the tradition Barks has built into the strip over the years.

Mickey Mouse on the other hand raises a lot of questions. In the pilot story by Michael T. Gilbert, Mickey and Minnie are on vacation in Venice. The characters are clearly meant to be a married couple. Minnie owns an antique shop.

What? What? If Mickey and Minnie are married, they must have sex, right? But didn't Disney sue the Air Pirates back in 1971 for "tarnishing the Disney image" by depicting the Iwerks-styled mice doing *IT* ? Is Disney now suggesting it's okay to *imply* that Mickey and Minnie have sex, but not to just go ahead and *show* what is certainly more than a common activity among mice? Joel Chandler Harris' Brer Rabbit was married to Ol' Molly Har who was conspicuously missing from Disney's SONG OF THE SOUTH as well as the subsequent comic book stories.

Gee, if you're going to grossly distort nature by presenting children with giant mice wearing clothes and keeping tiny kittens as pets, seems you've already put a good dent in their reality perception.

Gilbert's is a standard adventure plot with behavioral standards likely to be rejected by many contemporary readers, certainly those who are trying to alter the sex roles of their children. Instead of an enlightened woman of the nineties, Minnie is the same timid little character she was in 1926. If anything happens, she waits for her *hero* Mickey to take care of it, to rescue her. This reactionary view of passive feminity is out of phase with today's woman. Who is the intended reader here? I don't know of any married children and the Disney comics are promoted as little kid comics, but it appears from this new run of Mickey Mouse that Disney has an older reader in mind; if this is not so, let me be one of the first to reject the incoherent values presented in this comic.

Minnie Mouse entered the Disney world in 1928 when she was lifted off the landing by a crane hooked through her panties and dropped on the deck of a steamboat. Here we are 62 years later and she's walking around in a gondola in a pair of pink high heels. Back in *Steamboat Willie* Mickey was wearing a pair of shorts; today he's wearing sensible clothes.

I would like to see the relationship between Mickey and Minnie made clear to the child reader. If Minnie is already married to Mickey in this Phantom Gondolier story, then how can the Phantom expect to take her away to become his bride? Is a child expected to understand something like that? This Italian manifestation of Pan is evil and his touch can kill flowers. He is presented as a dark, terrifying adult figure, and he is not explained. Unlike The Phantom Blot in the original Mickey adventure, this Phantom does not turn out to be kindly old Walt Disney in disguise. We are not even sure what kind of animal he is, though the Gondolier appears to be a walrus. I would rate this comic GP and wouldn't buy it for a child under 12. The same goes for ROGER RABBIT which employs a concept far too kinky for children--a rabbit married to a ridiculous caricature of a woman like Jessica? Give me a break. I don't know. Maybe it's me. But can you imagine that stupid Roger Rabbit in bed with Jessica? Gruesome thought, huh? Roger's silliness doesn't work for me any better in the comic than it did in the film. In the comic he even talks to his mailbox! Jessica is a negative stereotype of woman and I am opposed to her inclusion in a comic aimed at little kids. Older readers may choose to see her as a parody of the film noir movie star, but I see her as another example of male movie/tv mogul backlash against the women's movement. The parallels between Toon Town and the human world present numerous plot possibilities and it isn't necessary to degrade women in order to explore them.

The revival of UNCLE SCROOGE is good stuff. It even contains a more enlightened view of an Indian tribe. So does the first issue of GOOFY ADVENTURES. I guess what I would like to see in all of these comics is a more enlightened attitude toward women and a lot more care given to the behavior being taught. These comics can and should be a positive force in teaching the value of community solidarity. I would like to see less nostalgia and more confrontation with the kind of reality that is evolving in our country. I'm tired of seeing other peoples depicted as minorities or simply ignored, and the old small town European immigrant farmer ethos that informed early Disney just doesn't wash in 1990. People from all over the world, Africa, Asia, Central and South America, now share this country and it is not only unrealistic but grossly unfair to present in a nationally distributed line of comic books what is basically a rural white anglo-saxon protestant fantasy world as being the norm for all who live here. America has always been a melting pot, assimilating people from all parts of the world and the comics world ought to reflect this. Let me tell you, behind the scenes in the comic companies, there are thousands of Latino and Asian in-betweeners and inkers. It must be a strange experience for many of these workers to spend their days drawing fantasies which seldom reflect or fulfill their own needs.

I am glad Disney has taken control of the comic books. I think the art in the new line is superb. My only fear is that the books will be turned into the wrong kind of propaganda and used to program kids with negative values toward women and other people while selling their parents an endless succession of products. Since the characters *are* products, there is no reason to advertise products in the magazines, but I am afraid this type of overkill has become *de rigeuer* in 1990.

Send a buck to Green Island, 5700 El Dorado, Apt. A, El Cerrito, CA 94530, and ask for the DZ, MEXICAN RADIO. I found it at Comic Relief in Berkeley.

JAKA'S STORY continues in CEREBUS 131. Aardvark-Vanaheim has reprinted CEREBUS 31 and 32. POB 1674, Station C, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. N2G 4R2.

COMIX PLUGOLA

EL VIBORA 123 has a Crumb cover and is $8 pp from J. M. Berengeuer, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain.

BIG SISTER 3 is $1 pp from Victor Gates, 552 Lancelot Dr. North Salt Lake, Utah 84054. Art by Randy H. Crawford.

MU PRESS

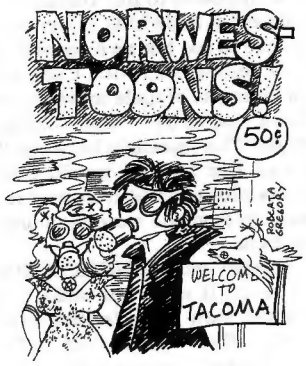
5014-D Roosevelt Way N. E., Seattle, WA 98105, has the following new comics for sale:

MORTY THE DOG, VOLUME ONE. $4.75 pp.

THE DESERT PEACH. Donna barr's latest. All four issues $10 pp.

Dresden and Getsu-Shin Moss' RHAT. $2.75 pp.

NORWESTOONS drawn at the Tacoma Sci-Fi Con, 50¢/st.



COMICS FOR THE DISABLED

Helpless Anger Productions' 1988 comic book entitled *Anti-Social for the Disabled* is currently being used as required reading material for a college course at the Illinois Institute of Technology. The book includes jokes and stories written by disability activists Mike Ervin and Susan Nussbaum, with artwork by Helpless Anger cartoonist Tom Roberts, himself a wheelchair user. Ms. Nussbaum's satirical play on a disabled theme, *STARING BACK*, produced in Chicago in 1985, was an inspiration for producing the comic. For information, write 333 S. East Ave., #209, Oak Park, IL 60302.

ARCHIE REVISITED

Back in the sixties--get out your old guitar and play along--ARCHIE completely lost touch. Various underground artists did the forties Montana characters in and got the usual threats from the company. Rick Griffin included Archie's face among lots of other images of trademarks and when that face appeared in a Print Mint comic, a lawsuit was threatened. Routine. MAD got a threat in the early fifties after the STARCHIE parody, but all was settled when Harvey Kurtzman promised to leave Archie alone in the future. Larry Welz' CHERRY POPTART is a blatant parody of the Archie style, one which continues today.

Started in 1945 by Bob Montana, Archie was one of the earliest comics to focus on white American teenagers. It was not the first strip, because older readers will remember HAROLD TEEN and John Held, Jr.'s MERELY MARGIE from the 1920s, so perhaps it would be more appropriate to call it a revival of the teenager. Just where Archie came from is open to debate. I would argue that Montana had been reading a lot of Edward Stratemeyer's HARDY BOY mysteries and that he assimilated the material into his comic strip. Bayport became Riverdale and Frank and Dick Hardy became Archie and Jughead.

To anyone who has ever been to a real high school, the world of Archie is an absurd fantasy. Archie and Jughead would have been routed to the nerd room in ANIMAL HOUSE, but within the safety of their own comic book they always come off as heroes and girls who wouldn't give them the time of day are shown fighting over them which leads one to suspect that the comic book line was designed with a dweeb readership in mind.

Hey, kids read this papola! LIFE WITH ARCHIE, which began as a spin-off in 1958, was in its 279th issue in July of 1990. When the cover showed one of those ditzy Archiette blondes hyped as "Mustang Sally" who was "turning the 90's into the 60's," I had to get into the act. I remembered, of course, that Gary Hallgren had created a character named Mustang Sally for SWANK MAGAZINE in the early seventies and that the two images of women had everything and nothing in common. I also remembered an interview I did with Jay Kinney at Gary Arlington's comic book store circa 1971 during which Kinney told me about his work restyling comic characters, a process whereby an artist is hired to dress old characters in the latest hip fashions supposedly to entice a new reader into buying the same old crapola.

Which it is. The Archie characters haven't changed much since 1945. They are still in high school, which makes them the oldest high school students extant. Fine. Hey, it's only a fantasy, huh? But it seems a bit jarring to me to read about characters who were sixteen in 1945, reflecting upon the sixties from the nineties. Archie would be about sixty now and it's time that old fart got his diploma and threw out those cheesy clothes he's been wearing all these years.

Archie's Mustang Sally is supposed to be the new hippy *chick* on campus. A headband and minidress make her hip. My apologies to feminist readers for using the derogatory term, and I suggest you address your letters to Archie Publications, because they are still as blatantly sexist as they have always been. The opening splash shows four boys ogling Sally as she arrives on campus and by panel three Sally is being put down by a couple of women students for wearing old-fashioned hippy drag. By the end of page two the student movement of the sixties has been trivialized by Sally who tells the others about her hip parents organizing a big protest that lead to nothing more significant than "a longer lunch hour and better library facilities." Sally takes the gang home to her "psychedelic shack," an old Victorian two-storey, and we are treated with some of the most embarassing dialogue ever to ooze out of a comic book. One woman wants to know if Sally's Mom wears hip-hugger suits and go-go boots and Archie tells Sally her parents are "totally hip. The issue for the protest is the loss of a football field. Sally's Dad says: "Why don't all of you dudes and chicks come inside for a few minutes and we'll have a heavy rap session." What goes on then is an insult to any eight-year-old's intelligence. The roles of the parents are no different than they would have been in 1945. Guess who goes out to get the punch and cookies? Dad? Guess again. Problem here is that these parents supposedly went to Berkeley in the sixties which is a joke. Dad said their protest was peaceful and orderly, that all they did was pass out flowers and read poetry and listen to folk singers entertain. They were protesting too much violence in sports. What a crock of shit that is. Thousands of people were in the streets of America during the sixties, protesting against the Viet Nam war, against racism, sexism, against discrimination, and against the exploitation of ethnic minorities. People were demanding that the leadership in this country uphold the Constitution as they were elected to do--Hey, what is this crapola, Archie? Why are you lying to young people about history? What is this? Nazi Germany revisited? Sally's Dad says his "protest was really done for fun..like a picnic." The hell it was! A lot of people put their careers and their lives on the line in those protest marches and demonstrations. Life with Archie is a lie, that's what it is. Those people are a gang of old reactionaries in costumes. Teenagers don't look, act, talk, think, or dress like them and as role models they are contemptable. White suburban middle-class Riverdale isn't even a viable fantasy. Most of the young people who came to Haight-Ashbury in the Summer of 1967 ran away from upper echelon ghettos like Riverdale and if you have read any of the novels that have come out of that period you know that most of these people spent their time trying to find themselves via this or that drug or therapy. I don't recall talking to many students during the decade I was teaching around the Bay Area circa 1965-71 who had much good to say about their parents. Why not? What was wrong with Riverdale? Too long to answer here. You can read MIDDLETOWN or THE ORGAN IZATIONAL MAN or THE LONELY CROWD or THE RECKONING or Leary's FLASHBACKS and get the answers for yourself. *I would suggest that instead of teaching the young how to deal with and survive in the world as it is becoming, a multi-ethnic, multinational entity, suburban enclaves try to force the young into an idealized mode of existence which no longer exists anywhere outside the WASP mind.*

Archie is a repository of a fake past, one that never existed anywhere, a world where a pubescent teenager never tries to have sex, never has to confront the complex religious and political contradictions of the adult world, never sees anyone from the third world, never has to deal with drugs and crime, never grows up in a single parent home, never hears about herpes and AIDS and the numerous other perils of modern life. This anachronism now costs a dollar copy and is approved by the Comics Code Authority.

Two thumbs down. Both mine.